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PREACHED BY

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THE REV. DR. HUSSEY,

AT THE

O P E N I N G

OF THE

S P A N I S H C H A P E L,

ON THE

EIGHTH OF DECEMBER, 1791.

TAKEN IN SHORT HAND

BY A

GENTLEMAN PRESENT.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR JAMES RIDGWAY, NO 1, YORK-STREET,
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M D C C X C I I.

1792

S E R M O N

PREACHED BY

THE REV. DR. HUSSEY.

AT THE

OPENING

OF THE

SPANISH CHAPEL.

ON THE

EIGHTH OF DECEMBER, 1791.



TAKEN IN THE HAND

CHRISTIAN VESSENT

LONDON

PRINTED FOR JAMES KNOX, NO. 1, YORK STREET.

AT JAMES KNOX'S

MDCCXCII

S E R M O N.

COME, LET US PRAISE THE LORD WITH JOY:
 LET US JOYFULLY SING TO GOD OUR SA-
 VIOUR. PSALM XCV. VER. i.

THE Catholic Church has chosen these words of the royal prophet, for the introduction to the divine office, which is sung by her children, in testimony of the honor, praise, and love, which they offer to the Sovereign Lord of all. Though they firmly believe, that nothing which they can do, can ever encrease or diminish his infinite

and eternal glory, yet they are assured by him, through his condescending revelations to man, that the sacrifices, the prayers, the hymns, and the canticles of his faithful servants, are acceptable and grateful to him. *Thou, O Lord, hast heard my prayer, says the Psalmist, my hymns and thanksgivings are pleasing before thy sight; the sacrifice of a contrite and humbled heart, thou, O Lord, wilt not despise.*

But solemn worship of prayer and adoration from the creature to the Creator, has been also the belief and practice of all ages of the world, man, from the beginning, worshipped his Maker, by some external marks of his dependence and gratitude. Cain offered the first fruits of the earth, and Abel a part of his flocks.—The worship of the first patriarchs was guided by such temporary rites and ceremonies, as occasional inspiration or tradition had taught them. This tradition, which had so nearly approached the origin of man, must have been clear and unequivocal. In the commencement of the old

law, the Israelites had their portable ark for the purpose of offering sacrifice; and the glory of having erected the first permanent temple for the worship of God, was reserved for the reign of Solomon, the son of David. In the beginning of the Christian law, prisons, caves, and deserts, were the temples in which the worship of God was offered.—The cruel persecutions of the times had driven the first Christians into these obscure retreats, where they assembled to celebrate the holy mysteries. During the first two hundred years, they had no written liturgy or form of worship. The *mystic sacrifice of the Lamb* was invariably the same; but the prayers, ceremonies, and thanksgivings, which accompanied it, were directed by such forms as tradition had handed down to them, from Christ and his Apostles. Their pious meetings were, however, calumniated,—their doctrines were misrepresented,—their loyalty to the Roman emperors suspected, and even the mystic sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist was so construed by popular delusion, that some of the Pagan historians of those times

had accused them of murdering at each meeting one whose flesh they first covered with flour, and then distributed to the votaries present, along with mystic libations of wine. Thus they left upon record, what was the belief of those first Christians, that the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ were distributed among the faithful, under the mystic representations of bread and wine.

But he who views, with patience and compassion, the errors of man,—he who, during so many ages, has suffered persecution against truth and virtue, to triumph, brings forward a serene morning after a long—a too long dark and stormy night of persecution and oppression against those who believe in his sacred law---he, in a seasonable time, will entirely break asunder the bands which forbid the propagation of true religion; and will grant toleration to all mankind. Not that impious toleration which is the murky produce of indifference to all religion, but that toleration which is the child of compassion, of forbearance, and charity, to the errors of others,

That principle which teaches us, that even the believer of a false and erroneous faith, may possibly be excusable in the sight of God, thro' the very excess of the sincerity of his ignorance or conviction; for that no error can be sinful, or exclude any from salvation, unless it be voluntary.

But whatever may be the erroneous, or true, opinions of man---in whatever light that Heaven may view the one, or the other, the exterior worship which may be offered to him by any, can never be acceptable, unless it proceeds from the heart. This is what the Apostle calls, *worshiping God in spirit and in truth*. That is, to be present at the awful mysteries of religion, not only with a due recollection and attention of mind, but also with a purity of heart, or at least with a desire of purifying it, if infected with the stain of sin. For, as it is certain, that to be present at the sacred mysteries, with an absent mind, or intent only upon worldly affairs, is not to worship God in spirit, it is equally true, that to be present with a heart contaminated by sin,

and resolved to continue in sin, is not to worship him in truth. To worship God in truth, says St. Paul, is, *to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light; to walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness; not in chambering and impurities; not in contention and envy; but in putting on Jesus Christ.* These two points, the worship of God in spirit---the worship of God in truth, mentioned by St. Paul, is the subject of the present discourse; and, in consideration of the unusual length of this day's solemnity, I shall be as brief as possible.

The whole world is, but one temple, which the infinite Being fills throughout with his presence. Wheresoever we are, he is there, for in God, *we live and move and have our being*—if we rise to the highest heavens, we there meet him—or if we sink into the lowest abyss, there also we find him. That sublime Being, who, as the prophet expresses it, *rides upon the wings of the wind, and directs the storm*—who guides the motions of the many millions of planets round

their respective suns, and preserves the harmony of the universe, is equally attentive to *the fall of a sparrow*, neither can a hair drop from your head, without his concurrence. His all-bounteous hand as effectually extends to those barbarous or infidel nations who do not acknowledge him, as to those who worship and adore him. The humble prayer from the lowly cottage, as surely reaches his throne, as the most solemn canticles in the most stately temple. But, though he be ever ready to listen to the prayers of his people, in whatsoever language, or in whatever corner of the globe, they invoke his name; yet from the earliest accounts that we have, of his revealed will to man, we learn, that he had frequently specified places where he wished that solemn worship should be offered---he has sometimes added, that he would be peculiarly attentive to such prayers as would be offered on that heaven-favoured spot. Speaking to Solomon, he says,---*My eyes shall be open, and mine ears shall attend to the prayers of him who shall pray in this place, for I have chosen and sanctified this place.*

He even ordered, that any profanation of it, should be punished with immediate death; and by his special command, no Israelite was permitted to come within sight of the sacred altar, without first purifying himself externally, as an emblem of the interior purity of his soul.

My brethren, if so much respect was due to the temple of Jerusalem, which was only a figure of the temples, where God is worshipped *in spirit, and in truth*. If it claimed such awe and respect to approach an altar, stained only with the blood of animals, what respect and awe is due, to that altar, upon which the blood of Christ is offered mystically for the sins of man? An altar as superior in sanctity to that of Jerusalem, as the immaculate victim of the new covenant, is above the blood of calves and goats, which were sacrificed upon the altar in Jerusalem? What, therefore, must we think of such Christians, as present themselves before this sacred altar, with an absent mind, or a mind intent only upon worldly occupations; or, it may be,

upon their criminal pleasures! None will dare to think, that such worship can be acceptable to God. For, he being a spirit, must be worshipped in spirit; but man being a compound of matter and spirit—an organized being, depending upon his external senses: these senses must be aided by the solemnity of worship, by the pomp of ceremonies, or perhaps by the affecting tones of music, to call home the wandering mind from worldly scenes, and to raise the spirit to the adoration of God. The proud philosopher may boldly presume, that he can raise his spirit to the contemplation of the Supreme Being, without such external aid—believe him not—if such a power be granted to man, it must be to one long habituated to the pious exercises of divine contemplation; but is a gift not conferred even upon the generality of the faithful.

Thus, superstition and fanaticism are the two extremes in religious worship, which a true Christian will endeavour to avoid. To put

one's trust and confidence in religious ceremonies, and ultimately rest upon them for his sanctification, is a doctrine repeatedly condemned by the Catholic Church. On the other hand, to despise those ceremonies, and to consider them as no way useful to raise the christian mind to the contemplation of the Sovereign Good, is equally erroneous—is a fanatic pride, the fallacy of which daily experience brings home to our conviction. Those external symbols in divine worship, are like the scaffolding to the pile, of which they do not constitute a part (as no scaffolding forms a part of any building), but they are no less necessary instruments to raise it to perfection. In every profession of the world, we find the utility of those external symbols, to enforce respect for the laws of the country—we find the necessity of them admitted for worldly purposes, by those very persons who reject them as useless in religious worship. Thus, the splendid dignity surrounding the monarch upon his throne—the awful solemnity of the judge upon the bench, cannot surely be more necessary to

impress the minds of the beholders with due veneration for those high dignities, than it is to employ similar means to impress the minds of Christians with profound respect for the sublime and incomprehensible mysteries of religion.

The sacred ornaments which surround the altar, the symbolic robes of the priest who officiates there, the various ceremonies employed by him, in offering up the divine sacrifice, have each of them a mystic allusion to some passage in the history of the passion and death of the Son of God. It would be injurious to you, to suspect you of paying any divine worship to those external representations; but how useful are they to raise your thoughts and hearts to the love of God! Your own experience can testify this. For you, in particular, my poor brethren, whose narrow circumstances in life have left illiterate, and thereby incapacitated from reading in those sources, whereby you might acquire knowledge of our redemption—the church tries to remedy that deficiency, by furnishing you with such sym-

bois, as must convey to the most ignorant and illiterate, the essential and sublime truths of the Christian law. That crucifixion on the altar, which, though of itself it is of no internal virtue or efficacy, yet it tells you in a more abridged, and perhaps in more affecting imagery, than several pages of Scripture could do, the ransom which your immortal soul has cost---no less than the crucifixion of the Son of God. In one single representation, it presents to your view, an epitome of the whole doctrine of the gospel---of all that is required of you, towards God, and towards man. It tells you, in the most pathetic language, that to suffer, and to forgive, is the example which he set for us, and the essence of our religion,

Thus, in every rank through life, external worship and supplication to God, are indispensable duties. Gratitude for blessings received, or supplications to avert evil, or to be relieved from it, are the natural appendages of our mortal state.

But, says the unbeliever, why supplicate Heaven to avert evil, or to relieve us from wants; for, if assistance and relief be proper for us, God will grant it without supplication; and, if it be not proper for us, all our supplications cannot obtain it. My brethren, such an idea is as opposite to the common notions of life, as it is to revelation. The common notions of life have formed into a proverbial maxim, that *what is obtained without asking, is generally received without gratitude, or thanks.* This is the case between man and man. Moreover, since God has declared in so many parts of Scripture (some of which I have quoted for you), that prayers and supplications to him, are the indispensable conditions upon which he will confer his benefits, it is highly absurd, and in some degree impious, to sit down coolly, and wait for *unasked-for grace*, or mercy; and expect, that it should be conferred, as the reward of idleness, of indolence, and of sloth. Besides, God sees that prayers and supplications have a tendency to amend the petitioner himself. They give him

habits of humility and dependence upon God. They accustom him to love and submission to his holy will, upon which love and submission his own happiness depends. They also make him submissive and obedient to the laws of his country. This example excites in others the same pious and useful sentiments; and these sentiments may render him at *length* worthy of obtaining from his Creator, those blessings for which, in the *beginning* of his prayers and supplications, he was totally unqualified. It was, therefore, wise in God, to make prayers and supplications to be necessary conditions for obtaining his benefits. Nay, Christ himself has compared the importuning solicitations of a petitioner to Heaven, to a man, who, wishing to borrow bread of his neighbour, does not desist from his importunity, after the first and second refusal, but perseveres until he obtains his wish.

If he shall continue at the door, says our Saviour, in the 11th chapter of St. Luke, though

his friend may not rise to save him, because he is his friend, yet he will because of his importunity. How much more so, continues he, will your Heavenly Father grant the good spirit to those who ask it.

But, through whatsoever external worship we put up our petitions to God, unless this worship be accompanied by a pious, attentive, and submissive mind, we worship him not *in spirit*, and all our prayers and prostrations are but empty forms, by which we neither glorify God, nor profit our own souls. *This people*, says the inspired writer, *worship me with their lips, whilst their hearts are far removed from me.* Thus, to appear before the sacred altar with a dissipated mind, and in that state to lay before God our weakness and necessities---to address him with our lips, whilst our hearts are unmoved---to call for his grace and assistance to raise us from sin, whilst we shew no desire of co-operating with his grace,---is nothing less than giving to our prayers and supplications an appearance of

mockery; and, instead of obtaining mercy by the exercise of the most useful and most consoling duty of the Catholic law, we but add to the catalogue of our sins. Cursed is he, says the Holy Ghost, *who doeth the work of the Lord negligently*; and what work is more peculiarly the Lord's, than the worship which is offered to him in his sacred house. To such Christians we may say, what St. Paul said to the Athenians, ---*they worship an unknown god*. They come not into the temple of the Lord, to raise their thoughts to him---these thoughts are far otherwise employed---upon their worldly projects---upon the encrease of their trade and business, or upon the promotion of their children.---Their minds are agitated only by the concerns of this world; disquieted by some losses---chagrined at some misfortunes---it may be, industrious only to attract a dangerous admiration, which, even out of this house, would be unlawful: but to aim at it in the house of prayer, is impiety and sacrilege. The Deity, before whom they bend the knee, is not the being

whom their hearts adore. Perhaps it is still worse—perhaps they dare to appear before the altar of the God of purity and truth (where the blood of the Redeemer of man is offered) with a heart possessed by the impure spirit, and possibly the very accomplice of his crimes, present along with him, sharing his looks and attention alternately with her and God's altar; and even at the solemn part of the holy mysteries, forming schemes for future crimes! Oh! away from hence, thou daring intruder! God abhors thy pretended worship and homage. The very angels who surround the holy place, view thee with indignation and horror; and impatiently wait for the commands of the Almighty, to expel thee, like another Heliodorus, out of the temple, as an apostate and contaminated sinner.

But no, sinner; notwithstanding thy infirmities, remain in the house of mercy. *God is patient, because he is eternal. He willeth not the death of the sinner, but his conversion: and where are you to expect that conversion more op-*

portunately than in the Lord's house? where, he himself says, *if two or three be assembled in his name, he will shed his blessings upon them.* If you depart from this house, in order to return to your usual scenes of folly, your having been present here will serve to provoke the justice of God, by the unworthy use which you make of his benefits, perhaps to be irrecoverably lost. The house of God is destined for the reception of sinners, as well as of the just. All the solemnities of our worship—the administration of the Holy Sacrament—nay, the sufferings and death of the Son of God, have principally in view, the reconciliation of sinners to their offended Creator. The Church no longer cries out from the altar, as was the practice in the first ages of Christianity, at the beginning of the sacrifice of the Mass, commanding the profane to depart, and not dare to be present at the sacred mysteries. Such distinctions are no longer made; and the wicked, as well as the just, are permitted to be present at the mystic sacrifice. But if the Church permits the sinner to be

present, it is because the Church presumes upon his sincere desire of being converted to God. Because the Church hopes, that the prayers of the faithful—the powerful intercession of the blood of Christ, will call down from Heaven upon him the grace of repentance. And that, though he comes into the house of God a sinner, he will depart from it, if not altogether purified from sin, at least that he will form holy resolutions of leading a better life in future. The Church admits him within the sacred walls, but places at the very door, water, which is *sanctified by the word of God and prayer*; not with any superstitious view, that such holy water can have any intrinsic self-efficacy or virtue; but, among other benefits, it reminds the Christian who besprinkles himself with it, that he is come into the house of the Lord, *where a pure and clean heart is necessary to make his offering acceptable to God*: and that if he be in sin, he ought to purify and wash himself from it, by repentance. He is thereby also reminded, that when he was baptized with that sacred emblem of inward clean-

ness of soul, he made a solemn promise to God, *to renounce the devil and all his works—the world and all its pomps—the flesh, with all its corruptions*; and, by besprinkling himself when he comes into the house of prayer, he calls God, his Angels, and the Church, to witness, that he thereby renews those vows he had made in baptism; and, therefore, his entering into the house of the Lord, at least without a resolution of turning from sin, and keeping those promises, proves him a perjurer, both on earth, and in heaven.

I have now, my brethren, briefly sketched the necessity---the duty---the advantages, of worshipping God; and thereby putting up our prayers and solicitations for his blessings and mercy. Thrice happy are those who avail themselves of these means of salvation, which Providence has furnished for them. But, let me add this awful warning too---Woe to those who neglect these means, which Heaven points out for their salvation---these will rise in judgment against them;

when the Righteous Judge will bring each to an account for what he *entrusted to his stewardship*; and when want of opportunity, and means of sanctification, cannot be alledged as the sinner's excuse. Whilst Heaven permitted that the Christian should be debarred the free exercise of his religion, his neglect might plead lenity---but what will excuse him, when all these impediments are removed---when, not only the restrictions of religion are lessened at home, but that a foreign religious and pious sovereign, who glories in the name and title of *Catholic King*, has generously and liberally erected this fabric which you behold? He, with true Catholic charity, considers, that whatever temporal interests may separate or divide one kingdom from another---however they may clash in their commercial or political views, yet he considers justly, that they ought to agree in universally promoting religious worship to the common Father of all, whose *sun shineth upon the just, and the unjust*. He has imbibed that true dogma of our holy faith---that the Catholic Religion is of no nation,

or tribe, or country---but is *the worship of that great Church*, described by the Prophet, which *was to extend from the rising to the setting sun*. Urged by these truly Catholic principles, so congenial to the title of his crown; and also by his known predilection for this nation, a predilection which is fomented by his virtuous representative at this court, and by the faithful servants around his throne, he has formed the establishment which you behold; hoping that God would pour down his blessings through this channel---that the prayers of the faithful offered up here might preserve peace, concord, and amity, between both nations.---But above all, hoping, that it might be the means of glorifying the *King of kings*, by being the source or instrument of eternal bliss to those who were ransomed by the blood of Christ. *Amen.*

FINIS.

